

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

SAB-01 IO-13 AID-05 /079 W

----- 124440

R 231458Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5702

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, GR

SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION BILL SPURS SPECULATION ON
CABINET CHANGES

1. SUMMARY. POINTING TO THE NEED FOR MODERNIZATION, DIVERSIFICATION AND AUTONOMY IN THE GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE, THE GOG LATE LAST WEEK PRESENTED A DRAFT BILL TO EFFECT CHANGES IN THE GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION. THE BILL EASILY PASSED EARLIER THIS WEEK, ALTHOUGH NOT WITHOUT SOME LOUD PROTEST FROM THE OPPOSITION. THE LEGISLATION, WHICH ALLOWS DISCRETION TO PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS AS TO ITS IMPLEMENTATION, CHANGES SLIGHTLY THE FUNCTIONS OF SOME OF THE MINISTRIES, CREATES SEVERAL NEW POSITIONS, INCLUDING TWO VICE PREMIERS, AND NORMALIZES THE STATUS OF SEVERAL CONSULTATIVE BODIES, INCLUDING THE ALL IMPORTANT GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE (SMALL CABINET) ON WHICH PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS RELIES HEAVILY. A SIDE EFFECT OF THE BILL, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE OF ITS PROVISIONS FOR NEW POSITIONS, HAS BEEN TO GIVE ADDED IMPETUS TO THE ONGOING SPECULATION OF A GOVERNMENT RESHUFFLE. END SUMMARY.

2. ON JULY 20TH, THE SUMMER RECESS SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENT PASSED A BILL ENTITLED "COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND MINISTRIES" WHICH BRINGS MINOR ALTERATIONS IN THE
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RESPONSIBILITIES OF ONE MINISTRY, NAME CHANGES TO

SEVERAL OTHERS, CREATES A VARIETY OF HIGH-LEVEL POSITIONS, AND NORMALIZES THE STATUS OF VARIOUS ADVISORY COMMITTEES IN THE GOVERNMENT. THE LEGISLATION IS PERMISSIVE AND ALLOWS THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIS CABINET CONSIDERABLE FLEXIBILITY OF ACTION IN CARRYING OUT ITS PROVISIONS. THE PRESENT MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY WILL EXPAND ITS RESPONSIBILITIES AND BECOME THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY AND ENERGY. THE PRESENT MINISTRY OF EMPLOYMENT WILL REVERT TO ITS FORMER NAME OF MINISTRY OF LABOR. THE MINISTRY OF COORDINATION AND PROGRAMMING WILL DROP THE LAST TITLE (PROGRAMMING) AND THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS WILL BE KNOWN AS THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS.

3. MORE INTERESTING, HOWEVER, ARE THE NEW, HIGH-LEVEL POSITIONS TO BE ESTABLISHED. TWO VICE PREMIERS WILL BE NAMED. ACCORDING TO THE GOVERNMENT'S VERSION, THEY ARE REQUIRED IN ORDER TO PROVIDE BETTER COORDINATION AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF THE OVERALL GOVERNMENTAL PROGRAM. THE PUNDITS, HOWEVER, CLAIM THAT THE POSITIONS ARE BEING CREATED FOR MINISTERS GEORGE RALLIS AND PANAYIOTIS PAPALIGOURAS, BOTH POSSIBLE HEIRS APPARENT TO CARAMANLIS, IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH AN EQUALITY BETWEEN THEM AND TO AVOID THE DISRUPTION OF THEIR POSSIBLE RIVALRY. THE SLOT OF ALTERNATE MINISTER OF COORDINATION IS TO BE ABOLISHED. (INCUMBENT JOHN BOUTOS IS WIDELY THOUGHT TO BE SLATED AS THE NEXT MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE.) THREE MINISTERS WITHOUT PORTFOLIO WILL BE NAMED TO ACT AS TROUBLESHOOTERS. FOR INSTANCE, IT WAS SUGGESTED THE FUNCTION OF ONE SUCH MINISTER WILL BE TO PRESIDE OVER GREECE'S ENTRY INTO THE EC. MOREOVER, FIVE NEW DEPUTY MINISTERS WILL BE APPOINTED FOR THE MINISTRIES OF DEFENSE, COORDINATION, WELFARE, AGRICULTURE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS. THE LAST DEPUTY MINISTER IS NEEDED, ARGUES THE GOVERNMENT, TO LOOK AFTER THE WELFARE OF GREEK CITIZENS LIVING AND WORKING ABROAD. THE NEW POSITIONS ARE JUSTIFIED PRIMARILY ON MANAGERIAL/ADMINISTRATIVE GROUNDS.

4. ADDITIONALLY THE NEW LEGISLATION NORMALIZES THE DE FACTO EXISTENCE OF SEVERAL IMPORTANT CONSULTATIVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COMMITTEES. AMONG THESE ARE THE ALL IMPORTANT GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE, UPON WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER RELIES FOR HIS PRIMARY ADVICE, AND THE ECONOMIC COMMITTEE AND THE MONETARY COMMITTEE. THESE COMMITTEES ARE DEFENDED ON THE GROUNDS OF PROVIDING TO THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT THE VIEWS OF SPECIALIZED POLITICAL AND SOCIAL GROUPS. IN EFFECT, THE GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE IS GIVEN PRIMACY TO ACT AS THE COORDINATING AND FOLLOW-UP AGENT

OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL. IT CONSISTS OF THE PRIME MINISTER THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND THE MINISTERS OF COORDINATION, FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENSE, FINANCE AND THE MINISTER TO THE PRESIDENCY OF THE GOVERNMENT.

5. WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S OVERWHELMING MAJORITY IN THE PARLIAMENT (215 SEATS OUT OF 300 SEATS), THE BILL PASSED WITHOUT DIFFICULTY. HOWEVER, THE OPPOSITION WAS LOUD IN PROTESTING CERTAIN PROVISIONS. COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE EXTERIOR (KKE) LEADER GREGORIS FARAKOS ATTACKED THE LEGISLATION, AND CHARGED PARTS WERE UNCONSTITUTIONAL. HE SAID THE SPECIAL STATUS ACCORDED THE GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED A "GOVERNMENT BY THE ELITE", WHEREAS THE CONSTITUTION CALLS FOR A UNIFIED GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY SHARED BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PARLIAMENT REPRESENTED THROUGH THE CONCIL OF MINISTERS. HE ALSO LAMBASTED THE GOVERNMENT FOR PRESENTING THE BILL DURING THE SUMMER RECESS, SAYING ITS IMPORTANCE CALLED FOR ITS CONSIDERATION BY THE FULL PARLIAMENT. UNION OF THE DEMOCRATIC CENTER OPPOSITION DEPUTY THEOHARIS MANAVIS DESCRIBED THE BILL AS MERELY A PALLIATIVE AND CALLED FOR A THOROUGH MODERNIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES. HE PROPOSED THE INSTITUTION OF NINE NEW MINISTRIES FOR THIS PURPOSE.

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

SAB-01 IO-13 AID-05 /079 W
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R 231458Z JUL 76
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5703

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6. REPLYING TO THE CRITICISM, GEORGE RALLIS STATES

THAT THE BILL IS NOT EXTRAORDINARY. HE DENIED THE NECESSITY FOR NEW MINISTRIES, NOTING DRYLY THAT SHOULD THE OPPOSITION BE ELEVATED TO POWER IT COULD ESTABLISH WHATEVER MINISTRIES IT WISHED. HE SAID THAT MANY OF THE NEW POSITIONS WOULD NOT ONLY PROVIDE FOR A SMOOTHER OPERATION OF THE GOVERNMENT PROCESS, BUT WOULD ALSO INTRODUCE NEW POLITICAL PERSONALITIES INTO THE ADMINISTRATION WHO, IF SUCCESSFUL, COULD BE USED MORE EXTENSIVELY.

7. THIS PARTICULAR PIECE OF LEGISLATION HAS BEEN UNDER PREPARATION FOR SOME TIME AND PROVIDES THE LEGAL BASIS FOR SOME CHANGES WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER REPORTEDLY HAS BEEN LONG CONTEMPLATING. IT ALSO NORMALIZES THE FUNCTIONING OF THE GOVERNMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES. HOWEVER, WHAT MAKES THIS DEVELOPMENT ESPECIALLY TITILLATING IN DOMESTIC POLITICAL CIRCLES IS THE CREATION OF NEW JOBS, ADDING FUEL TO THE COFFEE HOUSE RUMOR CIRCUIT WHICH FOR MONTHS HAS BEEN PREDICTING A CABINET RESHUFFLE DUE TO ALLEGED UNHAPPINESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER WITH THE PERFORMANCE OF SOME OF HIS PRESENT TEAM.

8. THE COMMENTATORS ARE REASONABLY AGREED THAT COORDINATION MINISTER PANAYIOTIS PAPALIGOURAS AS WELL AS MINISTER TO THE PRESIDENCY OF THE GOVERNMENT GEORGE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RALLIS WILL BE APPOINTED DEPUTY PRIME MINISTERS, ALTHOUGH MANY SURMISE THAT THE LATTER WILL SURRENDER HIS SECOND PORTFOLIO OF MINISTER OF EDUCATION. SOME CLAIM DEFENSE MINISTER AVEROFF IS FIRMLY ENSCONCED IN HIS PRESENT JOB, WHILE OTHER PREDICT HE WILL GO TO FOREIGN AFFAIRS, A ROLE HE HELD BEFORE (1956-63). SOME OBSERVERS SUGGEST CARMANLIS WILL TAKE OVER DEFENSE HIMSELF, AND THAT RETIRING ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL ARBOUZIS WILL BE HIS DEPUTY. OTHER CIRCLES CONTEND THAT AGRICULTURAL MINISTER IORDANOGLU, TRANSPORTATION MINISTER VAYATZIS, MERCHANT MARINE MINISTER PAPADONGHONAS AND PUBLIC WORKS MINISTER STRATOS ARE IN DANGER OF LOSING THEIR JOBS.

9. NAMES OF DEPUTIES FREQUENTLY MENTIONED AS LIKELY CANDIDATES TO FILL THE VACANCIES INCLUDE WELL-KNOWN FIGURES SUCH AS DIMITRIOS NIANIAS (EDUCATION), LEONIDAS BOURNISA (INDUSTRY), EMMANUEL KEFAYLOYIANNIS (MERCHANT MARINE) AND ARISTIDES KALANTZAKOS (FINANCE). SOME RELATIVELY NEW FACES SUCH AS DIMITRIOS LIVANOS, GEORGE TZITZICOSTAS, AND ONE OF THE REAL YOUNGSTERS IN THE PARLIAMENT, ANDREAS ANDRIANOPOULOS (29), WHO AUTHORED MUCH OF THE REORGANIZATION BILL AND SHEPHERDED IT THROUGH PARLIAMENT,

ARE TOUTED FOR IMPORTANT SUB-CABINET POSITIONS. FURTHER-
MORE, FORMER MINISTER CONSTANTINE MITSOTAKIS HAS
RECENTLY REEMERGED FROM SILENCE AND IS MENTIONED AS BEING
UNDER CONSIDERATION FOR A MINISTERIAL POSITION.

9. COMMENT: WITH THE CURRENT TENSIONS IN GREEK-TURKISH
RELATIONS AND THE TRADITIONAL LULL IN DOMESTIC GOVERN-
MENTAL ACTIVITY, AN IMMINENT CABINET CHANGE WOULD SEEM
IMPROBABLY. IT IS NOT INCONCEIVABLE, HOWEVER, THAT
COME THE FALL SOME PROVISIONS OF THE NEW LAW WILL BE
IMPLEMENTED AND NEW PERSONALITIES FOUND IN THE GOVERN-
MENT. WHAT IS UNLIKELY IS THAT EITHER WILL SIGNIFY
ABRUPT CHANGES IN THE COURSE OF GOVERNMENT CHARTED BY
AND UNDER THE CLOSE PERSONAL CONTROL OF PRIME MINISTER
CARAMANLIS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT REFORM, CABINET, LEGISLATIVE BILLS, REORGANIZATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ATHENS07486
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760284-0549
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760730/aaaaazsk.tel
Line Count: 238
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <29 APR 2004 by CollinP0>; APPROVED <19 AUG 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION BILL SPURS SPECULATION ON CABINET CHANGES
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, GR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006